



GatewayConnector

Planning Now For The Future



Newsletter 4

Fall 2004

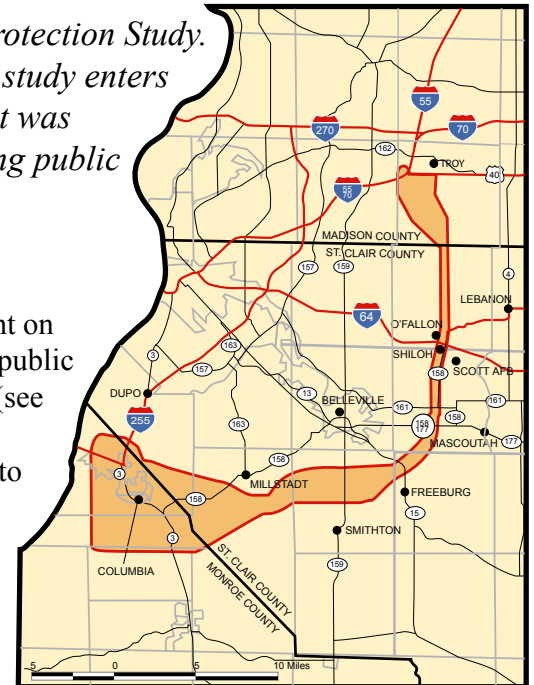
This is the final newsletter for the Gateway Connector Corridor Protection Study. IDOT appreciates your continued interest and participation as the study enters its final stages. This newsletter will recap the study's purpose, what was done during the study, and give you information about the upcoming public hearings and future study phases.

Preferred Corridor

In Spring 2004, all the corridor alternatives were individually evaluated on 24 key criteria such as residential, agricultural, commercial, and environmental impacts; existing and proposed land use; and traffic, safety, and general engineering issues. Public feedback on the corridor alternatives from the November 2003 and May 2004 public meetings, as well as comments received throughout the study, played an important role in this process. As a result of this evaluation, one Preferred Corridor has been selected for the entire study area.

You are invited to view and comment on the Preferred Corridor at a series of public hearings on November 3, 4, and 10 (see "Public Hearings" on page 4). Maps showing the corridor will be posted to the study website (www.gatewayconnector.com) following these meetings.

A Corridor Protection Report documenting the study's findings, evaluation process, public involvement activities, and other information can also be seen at the public hearings.



Project study area shown above.
Preferred Corridor not shown on this map.

Public Involvement

Outreach to all interested Metro East citizens has been a vital component of the Gateway Connector study. The study team held over sixty meetings with community leaders, legislators, state and federal resource agencies, property owners, residents, and special interest groups throughout the study. Along with the public meetings in July and November 2003 and May 2004, these meetings helped the study team learn about the concerns of area citizens while providing important details about the study.

All public comments were reviewed as part of the public involvement process. Reasonable suggestions or recommendations that addressed the study's purpose and need for a new corridor, or revealed significant issues or impacts, were incorporated into the team's analysis and decision-making.

The public involvement process is not a vote - "for" and "against" comments are not counted up and a "winner" declared as a result. Instead, the process is designed to help IDOT understand the views and concerns of everyone

interested in the study and address those concerns in the best manner possible.

**Public Hearings
November 3, 4 & 10!
See page 4.**

Study Recap

What Is This Study?

The Gateway Connector corridor study is a long-range transportation planning study. The purpose of the study is to identify and protect a corridor that could be used for future transportation needs in the Metro East, not to solve an immediate problem on area roadways. The corridor protected in this study will be 400 feet wide and extend approximately 37 miles. The area being studied begins at the I-55-70/U.S. 40 interchange in Troy and ends at the I-255/IL Route 3 interchange in Columbia. In addition to Troy and Columbia, other communities in or near the study area include O’Fallon, Shiloh, Belleville, Mascoutah, Freeburg, Smithton, Millstadt, Waterloo, and Duplo.

This study is not identifying or recommending any specific improvements that could be made within the corridor. The 400 foot corridor width can accommodate a variety of transportation facility types. The Phase I study (see “What’s Next?”) will evaluate a variety of options for the corridor in order to identify improvements that will be needed to handle the projected population and traffic growth.

Why Is This Study Needed?

The study is being conducted now because population and traffic growth in the region are expected to continue well into the future, *with or without a protected corridor*. Failing to respond now to this anticipated growth means that the demands placed on existing transportation systems will increase. As a result, travel times and congestion will increase, existing roads will require more frequent maintenance, and most importantly, the safety of the motoring public will be compromised. Although this study is not a catalyst for the region’s growth, the corridor could affect the type of land use that occurs near the corridor. Such land use decisions and determining where to encourage or discourage various types of development, will be made by individual property owners and local planning boards.

The study’s traffic projections show that (if a roadway is placed in the corridor) 15,000 to nearly 50,000 vehicles would use the corridor each day. This is not “new” traffic but represents vehicles being “removed” from existing routes.

These projections show that most motorists who would use the corridor would be making local trips, rather than traveling straight through the corridor.

What You Need To Know About Corridor Protection

Corridor protection is a legal process found in Statute 605 ILCS 5/4-510 of the Illinois Highway Code. This statute was first enacted by the state’s General Assembly in 1967. The process is a planning tool that helps IDOT, in conjunction with local communities and individuals, prepare for expected future transportation needs in a given area. Corridor protection is especially beneficial in areas experiencing tremendous growth, such as the communities in the Gateway Connector study area. Simply put, corridor protection:

- Minimizes residential and commercial displacements and environmental impacts
- Benefits communities by incorporating their long-range plans and needs
- Establishes a corridor that could be used for a variety of transportation improvements

Corridor protection does not mean it has already been determined that a new roadway facility is the best use for the Gateway Connector corridor. The Phase I study (see “What’s Next?”) will look at a variety of options – including the “No Build” option – to determine what transportation improvements could best handle the expected population and traffic growth. Phase I could find that improving existing routes, increasing mass transit, or other alternatives would better serve transportation needs instead of a new roadway facility. However, if a new facility is recommended in Phase I, then a corridor will be in place for its use. Such a facility would not necessarily be a multi-lane, limited-access highway; it is possible that more than one type of facility could be utilized, depending on the traffic needs in a given location.

Property owners within the protected corridor are not prohibited from using their property as they wish, nor will property be “seized” as a result of this study. If and when IDOT needs to acquire any property in the corridor, its value will be determined *at the time of purchase by IDOT*, not at the time the corridor is recorded. Property value is not “frozen” at the time of corridor protection.

Please visit www.gatewayconnector.com or call the toll-free comment line at 866-772-9148 for more information on corridor protection. IDOT staff will also be on hand at the upcoming public hearings to answer your questions.

This study’s final corridor could be modified during future study phases. For example, the more detailed level of analysis in Phase I may identify significant environmental impacts, displacement issues, or engineering concerns. Public input will play an important role in this process as well. Any such modifications to the corridor would most likely be minor shifts (for example, to avoid a cemetery or historical site), and would not mean that entirely new corridor options would be created.

What’s Next?

After the public hearings, any necessary revisions will be made to the Preferred Corridor based on substantive, relevant comments. A map showing the final corridor will then be filed in Madison, St. Clair, and Monroe counties. Property owners in the final corridor will be notified by registered mail from IDOT within 60 days of the map filing.

The Location and Environmental Study (“Phase I”) is included as part of Governor Blagojevich’s *Opportunity Returns* program. This phase could take up to five years to complete.

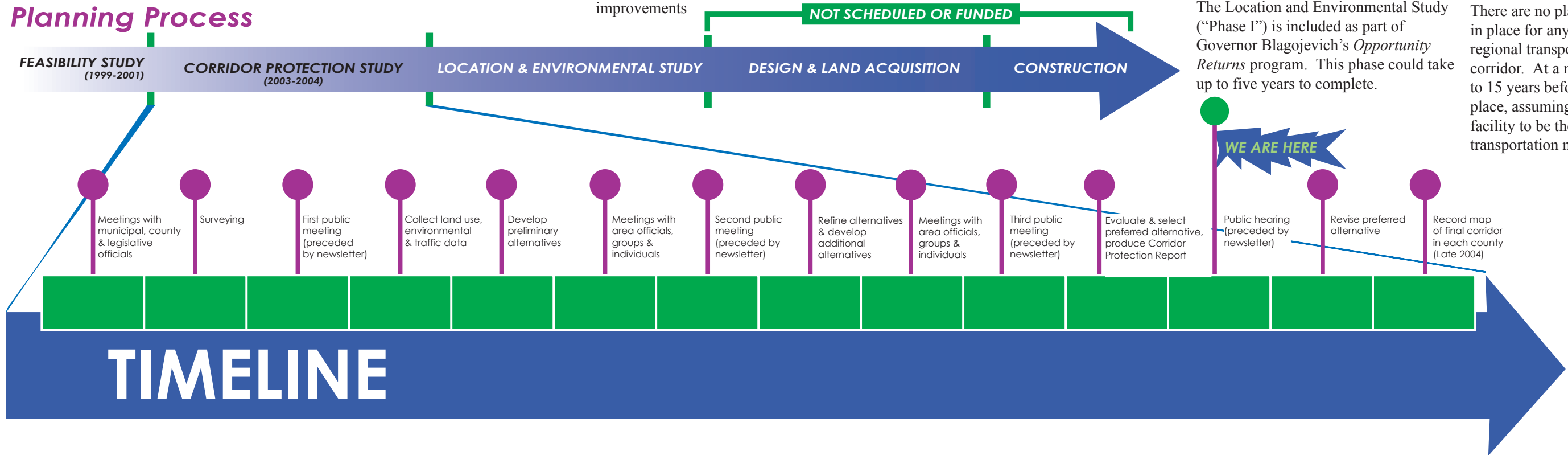
A number of important activities will take place during Phase I, such as:

- Evaluate potential environmental impacts and displacements
- Assess deficiencies and strengths of existing transportation system
- Conduct detailed traffic and land use studies
- Evaluate a variety of transportation improvement options for the corridor (including the “No Build” option)
- Recommend appropriate solutions for corridor and determine facility type
- Coordinate with communities and public to identify access needs and issues
- Conduct comprehensive public involvement and outreach

The Phase I study’s findings will be documented in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which is mandated by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1967 (NEPA) for federally-funded projects that could have significant effects on the environment. It is likely that any future construction would require some federal funding.

There are no plans, timetable, or funding in place for any construction of a new regional transportation facility within the corridor. At a minimum, it could be 10 to 15 years before any construction takes place, assuming Phase I identifies a new facility to be the best solution to future transportation needs.

Planning Process





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**Illinois Department
of Transportation**

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Public Hearings

November 3, 2004 – 4-7 pm

Southwest Illinois College (SWIC)
Intramural Gym
2500 Carlyle Avenue, Belleville

November 4, 2004 – 4-7 pm

The Falls Conference & Reception Center
300 Admiral Weinel Blvd., Columbia

November 10, 2004 – 4-7 pm

Gateway Convention Center
One Gateway Drive, Collinsville

The public hearings are the fourth and final series of public informational meetings for the study. The purpose of the hearings will be to present the study's Preferred Corridor for public review and comment, as well as other study-related information.

Copies of the Corridor Protection Report will also be available for you to inspect. IDOT and consultant team members will be on hand to answer your questions, discuss the study, and listen to your comments and concerns.

The same information will be presented at each location. As with the study's previous public meetings, the hearings will be held in an open-house format. No formal presentations or statements will be made.

Comment forms will be provided for you to fill out at the hearings or return by mail. An audio-tape recorder will be available if you prefer to make oral comments. All comments received before November 30, 2004, will be included in the official public hearing report. You are encouraged to attend and provide your input.

Can't make it to the public hearings?

We still want to hear from you. You can provide your comments any of the following ways:

E-mail: studyteam@gatewayconnector.com

Phone: 866-772-9148 (toll-free)
314-209-5929 (fax)
618-346-3396 (TDD)

Mail: GatewayConnector Study
3199 Riverport Tech Center Drive
St. Louis, MO 63043

Web: www.gatewayconnector.com

Comments received before November 30, 2004, will be included in the official public hearing report.